



News Release

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Dole Packaged Foods, Healthy Kids Georgia & DECAL Planning Special Field Trip for Georgia's Three-Star Child Care Nutritionists

Atlanta, GEORGIA – March 12, 2014 - - Nutritionists from thirty of Georgia's Three-Star Quality Rated Child Care Programs are being invited by Dole Packaged Foods to visit the North Carolina Research Campus next month to learn how to encourage good nutrition for Georgia's youngest learners. Bright from the Start: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning (DECAL) is partnering with Dole and Lt. Governor Casey Cagle's Healthy Kids Georgia Program to host the bus trip April 2-3, 2014. The first 30 Quality Rated three-star centers to apply will win a spot on the field trip.

"We know that even our youngest learners need to start understanding why healthy food choices and exercise lead to a path of lifelong health and well-being," said DECAL Commissioner Bobby Cagle. "That's why Dole Packaged Foods and Healthy Kids Georgia are making a real difference as they recognize Quality Rated child care programs committed to making health, nutrition and physical activity a priority. Public-private partnerships like this play a vitally important role in helping us meet our goals of nurturing Georgia's youngest children, keeping them safe and healthy, and enriching their lives."

During their visit, the Georgia group will hear from Dr. Nicholas Gillitt, Ph.D., Vice President of Nutrition and Director of the Dole Nutrition Institute. They will also tour the research campus and interact with other leading experts in the field.

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In December, 2012, Dole joined Healthy Kids Georgia and DECAL in announcing a partnership to promote good nutrition and increased physical activity in early childcare and education programs.

“Georgia’s childhood obesity epidemic is too large for any one organization or person to address alone. We must work together to collaboratively present our children and families with healthy lifestyle options so we can bring about real change and tackle this daunting challenge,” said Lt. Governor Casey Cagle. “Innovative public-private partnerships that bring together state, private, and community resources to confront the troubling trends we face in childhood obesity will have a lasting impact on future generations.”

Quality Rated is Georgia’s system to assess, improve, and communicate the level of quality in early care and education programs. Similar to rating systems for restaurants and hotels, Quality Rated identifies early care and education programs that meet a set of standards exceeding the state’s minimum licensing requirements and awards them a maximum three-star rating.

One of the five standards offers early care and education programs the opportunity to reflect on their current health and nutrition criteria and identify areas that can be improved. Points are assessed based on the completion of the Nutrition and Physical Activity Assessment; written improvement plans with documentation of actions taken to complete the plans; and evidence that the program has met each of the requirements listed for the standard.

Of the 300 Georgia child care programs now Quality Rated, 83 have received three stars.

“We are thrilled to welcome Georgia’s top child care nutritionists to the North Carolina Research Campus,” said Marty Ordman, Marketing Communications, Dole Packaged Foods. “Even more exciting is the potential of what they can take back to their programs in Georgia --- hopefully some new and creative ways to expose young students to more fruits and vegetables on a daily basis --- the perfect fuel for learning.”

About Dole Packaged Foods

Dole Packaged Foods, LLC, a subsidiary of Dole International Holdings, is a leader in sourcing, processing, distributing and marketing fruit products and healthy snacks throughout the world. Dole markets a full line of canned, jarred, cup, frozen and dried fruit products and is an innovator in new forms of packaging and processing fruit. For more information on Dole Packaged Foods, visit dole.com.

About Healthy Kids Georgia

An initiative of Lt. Governor Casey Cagle, the Lt. Governor’s Healthy Kids Georgia is a collaboration of the Office of Lieutenant Governor, the Alliance for a Healthier Generation’s Healthy Schools Program, and other corporate and community partners. Formed in 2010 to address the epidemic levels of childhood obesity in Georgia and the serious physical and emotional consequences of the problem, the program encourages schools to partner with their local communities and the Healthy Schools program to confront the childhood obesity crisis by implementing health and wellness programs in Georgia’s schools. Additionally, through Public Private Partnerships, Healthy Kids Georgia is the conduit for corporate support strategies to be implemented throughout the state upholding the mission to promote healthy lifestyles.

About DECAL

Bright from the Start: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning is responsible for meeting the child care and early education needs of Georgia's children and their families. It administers the nationally recognized Georgia's Pre-K Program, licenses child care centers and home-based child care, administers Georgia's Childcare and Parent Services (CAPS) program, federal nutrition programs, and manages voluntary quality enhancement programs.

The department also houses the Head Start State Collaboration Office, distributes federal funding to enhance the quality and availability of child care, and works collaboratively with Georgia child care resource and referral agencies and organizations throughout the state to enhance early care and education. For more information, go to www.decal.ga.gov.